Archival Imperialism: Examining Israel's Six Day War Files in the Era of "Decolonization"

Tamara N. Rayan, University of Toronto

Abstract: This research investigates how the interventions of records' creators and archivists have shaped the Six Day War Files Collection to sustain Israel's own narrative of the War. Using a theoretical framework of settler colonialism, epistemic delinking, and symbolic annihilation, this narrative is deconstructed to showcase how it has served to further Israeli colonialism at the expense of Palestinians being marginalized as a people and Palestine being erased as an autonomous state. In constructing this narrative, Palestinians were excluded from the telling of the Six Day War, and in instances where they could not be erased, they were misrepresented or maligned. By delinking the records from their colonial context and unsettling this narrative, Palestinians' experience of coloniality can be reinstated where it was excluded. This paper offers a novel perspective to the current archival scholarship regarding Palestine, revealing how symbolic annihilation in the archive extends and is an extension of systemic annihilation. Moreover, it challenges traditional archival practices which have historically paved the way for acts of imperialism to occur unquestioned.

A common tactic that imperial nations use to assert their sovereignty within another nation is to construct and perpetuate representations that depict that nation and its people as inferior. Colonization is a devious system. As a territory is appropriated and exploited for another nation's gain, the colonizer is exonerated from any wrongdoings because they employ "a racialism that systematically devalues the self-worth, culture and history of the colonized" (Ghaddar and Caswell, 2019, p. 72). While the colonizer interjects their own invasive settler society, this denial of the worth of the colonized "justifie[s] various policies of either extermination or domestication" (Tuhiwai Smith, 2012, p. 27). The continued existence of indigenous[1] populations over time comes to be seen as a threat while the existence of the settler is safeguarded using apartheid walls, security fences, and reserves. Controlling the idea of the colonized, however, goes beyond misrepresentation, extending into the archive and becoming truth in a nation's official documentation. The monopolization of archival material is the colonization of information, an intentional tactic used to regulate, control, and subjugate the colonized alongside the theft and remapping of their territory (Stoler, 2002, p. 97). How do we as archivists engage with problematic archival materials knowing that they are still valuable sites of inquiry despite being moored to imperialism?

It begins with a shift—an "epistemic 'delinking' from the colonial matrix of power" (Cushman et al., 2019, p. 2), used to interrogate the records against their context of settler colonialism. The epistemology of the archive has been recontextualized through the vantage points of many different colonized groups, but the

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predominant focus has been upon case studies of Indigenous peoples within Commonwealth nations (Buchanan, 2007; Luker, 2017; Genovese, 2016; Delva and Adams, 2016; Duarte and Belarde-Lewis, 2015, McCracken, 2015; Thorpe, 2014). This has left few investigations into the state archives of non-Western settler colonial nations (Khumalo, 2018; Frings-Hessami, 2019). Of these investigations, Palestine as a colonized nation has been given little attention. Moreover, within this body of scholarship the scope is largely limited to an analysis of Palestinian documentary heritage without delving critically into the gritty context of settler colonialism in which it exists. For instance, scholars have been reading against the grain of Israeli records to re-insert the historical Palestinian presence where they were willfully excluded (Sela, 2000, 2007, 2009, 2017, 2017, 2018; Davis, 2016; Doumani, 2009; Bshara, 2013; Denes, 2015). The limitation of many of these studies, however, is that they do not negate the imperial power that continues to erase Palestinians in the documentation of the present. Scholars have also sought to reconceptualize current archival practices to consider the needs of Palestinians living under occupation and in diaspora, but these practices are ineffective if unadopted by the Israeli archives continuing to perform archival imperialism (Stoler, 2018; Butler, 2009; Aboubakr, 2017). If Palestinian history is to be reinstated where it has been erased, I argue that we must not limit our focus to the boundaries of the archive. We must extend this analysis to the larger apparatuses of Israeli imperialism within which the archive operates.

Since pre-Statehood, Israeli settlers have upheld a narrative that the land was "a desert supposedly empty of indigenous inhabitants," before they arrived, which supported Zionism's "biblical ideology designed to establish the Jewish people's 'historical right' to the land" (Sela, 2016, p. 52). Since then, the Israeli military has been suppressing contradictory narratives found within Palestinian archives, non-profit institutions, and even personal records (Sela, 2017, p. 201). While Palestinian documentary heritage is colonized by Israeli imperialism, Israeli archives create and preserve their own narratives unimpeded by dissenting voices. One such archival collection is the Six Day War Files, a digital collection within the custody of the Israel State Archives (ISA). This significant body of records, held under restricted status for 50 years since their creation, document the decision-making processes of Israel's most powerful political authorities as they reacted to the events and the aftermath of the 1967 Six Day War in real time.[2] Overall, the Six Day War, referred to as *Al-Naksa* (The Setback) by Palestinians, set into motion territorial changes that have defined the area as we know it in the present: Israel's victory captured the Gaza Strip and the Sinai Peninsula from Egypt, the West Bank and East Jerusalem from Jordan, and the Golan Heights from Syria (Oren, 2002, p. 308).

In this paper, based on research conducted during the writing of my master's thesis, I argue that the Six Day War Files have served to further Israeli colonialism at the expense of Palestinians being marginalized as a people and Palestine being erased as an autonomous state. In order to systemically annihilate Palestinians on the ground, the records' creators symbolically annihilated the *idea* of Palestinians, a process Michelle Caswell (2016) defines as "what happens to members of marginalized groups when they are absent, grossly under-represented, maligned, or trivialized" in the archive (p. 27). I engage this theory of symbolic annihilation to delink the records from their colonial context and bring "to the foreground" what has been erased: "other epistemologies, other principles of knowledge and understanding" (Mignolo, 2007, p. 453) belonging to Palestinians. The term "epistemic delinking" in relation to decoloniality originates in the discussions of Aníbal Quijano (1999, later translated to English in 2007) and Walter Mignolo (2007). These works posit that coloniality is deeply entwined with the myth of European modernity, which has justified colonial violence and exploitation in the name of power and development (Quijano, 2007, p. 169). Much

like other imperial nations, the colonial situation imposed upon Palestine by Israel is fueled by the rhetoric of modernity and the logic of coloniality. However, it is important to note that Israel has its own idiosyncratic logic of coloniality seen in how a division of race is established. Legally, Israel has been declared a Jewish ethno-state and the homeland of the Jewish people, thereby allowing its people to claim the right of the indigenous and mischaracterize Palestine as a 2000-year-old settler state. This logic of coloniality is then upheld through the symbolic annihilation of the national, ethnic, and cultural identity of Palestinians. By symbolically annihilating those who have been colonized, Israeli records creators have reversed the roles of indigenous and settler while arming the state with tools to ensure the continued suppression of the numbers and rights of the Palestinian minority

Despite Israel's victory, these records are full of tensions that reveal the Cabinet ministers' anxiety over how to deal with the Palestinian bodies that came part and parcel with their conquered land. As the creators of these records, Israel's Cabinet have had a heavy hand in how Palestinians were viewed and therefore treated during the large-scale territorial upheaval of 1967. Sustaining this, state archivists then preserved these colonial ideologies by selecting to archive some records over others, digitizing and increasing the reach of certain types of records and then describing such records within the parameters of Israeli-Zionist ideology. Thus, the outline of my study is as follows: first, I examine how misrepresentation and erasure of Palestinians within the content of the records is used to condone new discriminatory policies following the aftermath of the War. Then, I examine the archival practices of description, censorship, and appraisal applied to the Six Day War Files to demonstrate how the context of these records are reframed under an Israeli-Zionist worldview used to justify state imperialism. In doing so, I connect these archival acts to larger processes of systemic discrimination that occur in Israeli society, ultimately addressing how archives further and legitimize settler colonialism. This paper offers a novel perspective to the current archival scholarship regarding Palestine, which predominantly analyzes Israeli archives in and of themselves, thereby overlooking the deeper, systemic reasons behind how and why Palestinians are subjugated through recordkeeping.

Record Content: Finding Palestine amidst Erasure

The discourses documented within the Six Day War Files followed certain rules of what could be said and what must be excluded from history so Israeli sovereignty could take root. Typically, what is found to be excluded in colonial archives are the colonized themselves, for the colonizer's "cataloguing and descriptive procedures actually work to render Native subjects invisible in both history and the law" (Cushman et al., 2019, p. 10). Within the Six Day War Files, the Palestinian presence was purposely not documented or was misrepresented to justify new imperial policies that disenfranchised Palestinians living within Israel's newly seized territory. One of these areas was East Jerusalem, which is predominantly comprised of Palestinian citizens and prior to the Six Day War was occupied by Jordan. During the meeting of June 11, 1967, the Cabinet ministers discussed how to maneuver the political and legal status of Jerusalem to ensure that both the entire city of Jerusalem remained united under Israeli control:

> Minister of Police, E. Sasson: I am in favor of hurrying as much as possible to hold our political debate on peace goals in general, and we will not divide things into parts: today, Jerusalem, tomorrow Gaza and the next day, elsewhere. We need to hurry and set goals as much as possible. Regarding Jerusalem—if you want to connect the new city with the Old City to provide services, you can do so without declaring annexation.

> Minister of Justice, Y.S. Shapira: What you are suggesting is a war crime.
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> Minister of Police, E. Sasson: I do not know if this is a war crime; we provide services to the Old City… This committee will formulate our peace goals, and as I said before, we should do so as soon as possible, if possible, within two or three days… It is the first time after nineteen years that Israel's entire land has joined and is under Jewish rule. In my opinion, the military should determine the security map we need. If we discuss and consider our peace goals, I do not think we want to keep everything we conquered plus a million and a half Arabs when there is no *Aliyah,*[3] and here the Arab population multiplies.
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> Minister M. Begin: First, regarding Jerusalem. Following the statement of the Minister of Justice, I would suggest that we in no way use the term "annexation." The translation of the word annexation is a grasping of land where we do not have the same rights we have here. It is reminiscent of Bosnia's famous annexation. This word should be deleted from our dictionary. If we were to use it concerning Jerusalem, you would not hear of other parts of Israel. I think the original and main offer of the Minister of Justice should be accepted, to enact a law called the Jerusalem Law of the Capital of Israel and in the first section let's say that the complete Jerusalem is the capital of Israel. Then all the terminology problems fall away (Prime Minister's Office, Minutes of the Government's Meeting/Reflection Minutes – C of Sivan 5766 – 11.6.1967, Six Day War Files Collection*, pp. 20-21).[4]

Throughout these meetings Palestinians are continuously referred to by their ethnicity rather than their nationality, i.e., using the term "Arabs" instead of "Palestinians," thereby symbolically annihilating their national identity. As Caswell reminds us, "the symbolic annihilation marginalized communities face in the archives has far-reaching consequences for both how communities see themselves and how history is written for decades to come" (2014, p. 36). By suppressing any explicit reference to "Palestine" or "Palestinians" within official government archival documentation, the Cabinet ministers were able to displace large volumes of "Arab" populations because they unmoored the Palestinian identity from Palestine. Thus, the Palestinian nation became disconnected Arab localities in Gaza, the West Bank, and Jerusalem, while any connection to a larger Palestine was erased. This allowed for the ministers to advance the annexation of the Old City of Jerusalem, because in symbolically annihilating Palestine as a nation, they erased Palestinian ownership of Jerusalem.

Epistemic delinking speaks against this narrative by centering "new subjects of knowledge and understanding that had been negated, ignored and made invisible, precisely, by the imperial" (Mignolo, 2007, p. 460). When we delink this record from the colonial matrix of power, the act of Israel's government "connect[ing] the new city to the Old City to provide services" becomes, as Minister of Justice Shapira bluntly and rightly points out, "a war crime," a unilateral act whereby a state appropriates another's territory and proclaims their sovereignty. Despite the Minister of Justice's admission that this is a war crime, the annexation of Jerusalem is seen as neither annexation nor a war crime. "Annexation," as well as the lives and homes of the Palestinians implied within this unilateral act was, as Minister Begin expressed, merely a problem of terminology that the ministers, and subsequently history, had the privilege to ignore.

In delinking this narrative from its colonial context and centering the Palestinian subject, we prioritize an alternative narrative symbolically annihilated by Israel's Cabinet. This narrative speaks to the regions of Palestine that were hacked up by Israel after their victory in the War. Since the annexation of Jerusalem, the

city has been transformed, whereby "a complex system of separation and surveillance—walls, towers, and checkpoints—supposedly unifies a greater Jewish Jerusalem, but in reality slices the city into Israeli and Palestinian enclaves" (Shoshan, 2010, p. 276). Within their enclave, Palestinians are denied full citizenship rights and are subject to unfair residency standards that are nearly impossible to meet. If one is unable to sustain a permanent address in Jerusalem or if one marries a Palestinian with residency in the West Bank or Gaza, their identity card granting them the right to live in Jerusalem will be revoked (Stein, 1998, p. 8). To justify these ethics, Israeli ministers have constructed and perpetuated a misrepresentation of Palestinian identity as a race without a nation and therefore denied them citizenship rights. The trauma underlying the ongoing displacement of Palestinians is thereby erased, and their land is rendered free for Israeli ownership and settlement. Decoloniality, as Mignolo (2007) explains, "means working toward a vision of human life that is not dependent upon or structured by the forced imposition of one ideal society over those that differ" (p. 459). Therefore, Israel's narratives must be delinked from the logic of coloniality and the myth of modernity which justify colonial violence. In working towards decoloniality, we must call attention to the voices working to bury Palestinians under the roar of imperialism and instead ground these narratives in the epistemology of the colonized.

Archival Description: History Belongs to Those Who Describe It

The representation of the colonized within these records paved the way for racially oppressive policies that are still being upheld today. Though these records were created in 1967, the colonial ideologies that they introduce have been sustained through archival processes. The Six Day War Files Collection has had 50 years in which to be carefully appraised, arranged, described, preserved and digitized by state archivists far from the eyes of public accountability during its exceedingly long restriction period. Now, the Collection has emerged into public consciousness as a highly mediated artifact, having undergone various premeditated interventions to frame its contents within an Israeli-Zionist worldview. How do we as present-day scholars, archivists, and citizens begin to delineate the trail of rupture and interference?

It is well established in archival scholarship that archivalization, defined by Eric Ketelaar (2001) as "the conscious or unconscious choice (determined by social and cultural factors) to consider something worth archiving" (p. 133), is a biased process that positions select historical narratives as truth within collective memory. The process of archival description in particular is notorious for its role in the production of knowledge, because it is "closely linked to societal processes of remembering and forgetting, inclusion and exclusion, and the power relationships they embody" (McKemmish et al., 2005, p. 1). However, as Linda Tuhiwai Smith (2012) posits, there are always signs that reveal how certain "truths" are constructed, and "whilst there may not be a unitary system, there are 'rules' which help make sense of what is contained within the archive and enable 'knowledge' to be recognized" (p. 45). Understanding how records about Palestinians are *made* and *framed* by those with colonial power is key to understanding the mechanisms of colonialism and delineating the trail of rupture it has left in collective memory. In unearthing the processes of forgetting, exclusion, and reframing that have worked to transform Israel's colonial narrative into historical fact, I seek to unsettle the records from this narrative in which they have been situated and reinstate Palestinians' experience of coloniality where it has been excluded.

The highest level of description for the Six Day War Files is the collection.[5] This description provides information about records found at lower levels and outlines the historical background of the Six Day War.

In the description of the War, however, there is no mention of Palestine or Palestinians despite their cataclysmic losses. Archivist Lazubick states that "victory had a heavy price: 779 soldiers fell, nearly 2,600 wounded, 15 captured" ("Introduction," Six Day War Files Collection, 2017, para. 3). However, these numbers make no mention of the 18,300 Palestinians, Egyptians, Jordanians, and Syrians killed during the conflict. Moreover, this archival description does not refer to the 200,000 Palestinians forced to leave their homes to become refugees in the West Bank and Jordan (Dodd and Barakat, 1970, p. 123). The act of documenting which lives are lost in war is premeditated based on the power relations of those fighting, because as Judith Butler states, "if certain lives are deemed worth living, protecting, and grieving and others not, then this way of differentiating lives cannot be understood as a problem of identity or even of the subject. It is rather a question of how power forms the field" (2009, p. 163). By symbolically annihilating the number of Arab deaths (and therefore the lives to which they belong) in the writing of the nation's official historical narrative, Israel is able to represent itself in glorifying terms: "a small country with narrow boundaries [that] tripled its territory" ("Introduction," Six Day War Files Collection, 2017, para. 2). The use of language in this description bestows Israel with innocence: it "tripled" its territory, rather than seized another territory's land, allowing for the displacement and replacement of the indigenous.

Symbolic annihilation functions not only by obvious acts of erasure, but also through subtle processes of reframing and renaming. One series of photographic material in the Collection, entitled "Back to the Cisterns: Jerusalem and Judea and Samaria after the Six Day War through the camera lens of photographer Yehuda Eisenstark," is guilty of this. In the title itself, archivists employ the biblical terms "Judea" and "Samaria" to describe areas that were conquered in the Six Day War rather than the Arabic name *ad-Diffah i-Garbiyyah* (West Bank). This affiliation links the current Israeli sovereignty to the Kingdom of Israel, allowing the settlers to claim the right of the indigenous even though the Kingdoms of Israel and Judah historically only existed from roughly the 10th century BC to the 7th century BC (Williamson, 2015). By renaming Palestinian territory with historical Jewish names, the archivists legitimize the Jewish right to return, while justifying the erasure of Palestine which is represented as a 2,000-year-old settler state.

This is further demonstrated in how the archivists refer to the Jewish return to cities such as Hebron. The city was known as Hebron in biblical times but has since been known as *Al-Khalil* to Palestinians. During the Six Day War, Israel occupied *Al-Khalil* and established a military government that to this day has never been dissolved. *Al-Khalil*/Hebron is now divided into two sectors, the first of which is under the control of the Palestinian Authority and the second under Israeli military control. Despite the symbolic reframing and renaming of *Al-Khalil,* the logic of a Jewish ethno-state becomes unstable when confronted with the 80% Palestinian majority living within this region. These numbers are a reminder that Israel has *not* always existed and for 2,000 years the land has been Palestinian. Colonial erasure within the archive, however, is always mirrored in colonial oppression on the ground. Forced curfews, military barriers, and checkpoints are used by the Israeli military to push Palestinians out of the city and reify Hebron as a Jewish city (Yvroux, 2009, p. 240). In supplanting the Palestinian history of *Al-Khalil* with the Jewish identity of Hebron, the archivists set roots for *Al-Khalil* to be subsumed within Israeli sovereignty.

Archival practices have historically paved the way for acts of imperialism to occur unquestioned, for as Taylor R. Genovese (2016) states, "imperial powers [have been] able to secure and maintain power by controlling the information that was recorded, essentially deliberately creating an archival gap by omitting—either explicitly or implicitly—the ideas of the conquered" (p. 34). If this narrative, framed upon

the Zionist promise of "victory" and "return," is to be given legitimacy and weight in the remembering of the Six Day War, then those who were conquered and colonized must not be allowed to be documented. We must resist the natural processes of imperialism by delinking from this epistemological frame and redefining the Six Day War as an act of colonization hinged upon the physical expulsion and symbolic denial of the indigenous population.

Access Conditions: Censorship and Selective Appraisal as Cyclical Violence

Archival description is not the only practice that archivists utilize to exert control over records in their custody. Often colonial governments rely on censorship and selective appraisal when information within their records proves to be too incriminating to be reframed (Banton, 2017, p. 45). Israel is no different, as there exists a great deal of information compiled within their official records that remains inaccessible to the public. Israel's process of declassification is not governed by any kind of freedom of information act, but by the Law of Archives which has remained largely unchanged since 1955. Section 10.c.2 of the Law of Archives states that information can be restricted in order to protect the security of the state or the privacy of individuals. Furthermore, a special committee of Cabinet ministers may decide to classify specific files beyond the customary 50 to 70-year restriction period. Trish Luker (2017) has noted that it is typical of settler colonial archives to assert "an ongoing proprietary right to determine access to colonial records" (p. 119). Epistemic delinking can be applied in this situation to oppose the decision-making processes that have determined the Collection's access conditions. In analyzing what information is hidden within the Six Day War Files and why, I aim to expose the ongoing, clandestine cycle of violence whereby settler states inflict violence upon the colonized, refuse accountability by obfuscating their records of such violence, and proceed to inflict further violence without repercussions.

The Collection is riddled with blatant censorship; however, the Cabinet meeting of June 11, 1967 is significant because it contains a partially censored argument over how to proceed with the unification of Jerusalem and the citizenship status of Palestinians in the city. In this meeting, Minister of Housing Bentov expressed that if Israel is "a democratic state…the Arab residents of the second part of Jerusalem will become citizens of Israel" (Prime Minister's Office, "Minutes of the Government Meeting/Meeting Ministers – 11.6.1967", p. 30). In order to circumvent Palestinian self-governance, Bentov suggested that the Cabinet "should consider the possibility of unification between the two parts [of Jerusalem], with the first and foremost being expressed by declaration or by law" (p. 30). This approach was defended by Bentov as the best way to avoid "internal complications" because though "we [the Cabinet] could have run [Jerusalem] for a long time by a military government, it would not be possible to divide one city so that some residents belong to one government and some residents to another" (p. 30). Denying the citizenship rights of Palestinians remains a sticking point in these negotiations, and after Bentov's speech, a large section of the transcript is redacted by the archivists. We can deduce that this missing section pertains to one of the ministers having doubts about unifying the city under Israeli law and denying citizenship status to Arab residents because Minister without Portfolio Yosef Sapir stresses that if anyone has any doubt, then Israel would be pressured to return Jerusalem (p. 32).

What is more significant than the censored content itself is what the ISA's censorship decisions reveal about Israel's colonial rule. The denial of citizenship rights to Arab-Palestinians discussed in this meeting has

since left Palestinian residents in a vulnerable position, governed by a separate administration than Jewish citizens in Jerusalem, and without the same housing rights. Not only were Palestinians not represented at the negotiating table of this pinnacle moment, but for the archivists to willfully censor the archival documentation means that Palestinians are further denied their rights by being unable to access this information. The demarcation that archives erect between those who do and do not have access to information both reflects and sustains power relations that exist outside of the archive. Archival scholar Caitlin M. Davis has (2016) also found Israeli archives to be an apparatus of governance, whereby documents are deemed "public" or "secret," thereby shaping and reflecting "the relations between and among different participants inside and outside of the government" (p. 9). Lor & Britz (2007) delineate access to information as a marker of social equity, in which "the denial of access to information…marginalizes people's participation in the various economic, political and socio-cultural activities" (p. 392). Though the ISA has declassified the Six Day War Files Collection, authorities still exert their control over the dissemination of knowledge according to their own interests.

Appraisal works similarly in an archival context, wherein the archivist identifies what items, files, series, or collections/fonds have enough value to be accessioned into the archive prior to donation or physical transfer (SAA, 2020). This limits appraisal to a single point within the archival process: the decision over what is worthy of preservation. I argue that this responsibility and agency on the part of the archivist does not end after a record has been safely stored in the archive's custody. In the current hybrid archival environment where archivists must wield virtuosity in both analog and digital formats, they must also perform appraisal when deciding whether a textual record is worthy of *digital* preservation. The process of archivalization is extended into this arena of archival agency, as once again the archivist must consciously or unconsciously decide based on social, political, and cultural factors, what records are valuable enough to have their reach, access, and use increased exponentially by the conditions of possibility offered by digitization.

By the time 50 years of restriction had passed, the archivists were tasked with a situation where they were required to perform a secondary appraisal of the Collection, asking: what records are to be publicly accessible in physical form, *and* what records are to be digitized for global access in digital form?[6] By the time of this writing, much of the Collection has been fully digitized, but curiously, the only series not fully accessible to the public are the Israel Radio Recordings. Each of the hundreds of audio recordings within this series can only be accessed by special request by completing a form through the ISA website. In an initial experiment, I directed multiple requests to the archivists to attempt to gain access to different items within the series, but only received one response:

> Dear Tam Rayan
>
> Subject: Your request to view a file
>
> Your request from 22/09/2019 08:58 number CAS-152687-F3B8M1.
>
> We are happy to inform you that the file you requested (see the name and code number in Hebrew below) has been scanned and is available on the Israel State Archives youtube [sic] channel.
>
> Name of file מלחמת ששת הימים (Six Day War)

171/29-טס Code, box and file number

ISA-moc-IsraelBroadcast-0010i8k signature

For your convenience, we attach a link to the file:

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xv28IpIOT0Q

Thank you for using the services of the Israel State Archives.

Please do not reply to this mail.

Best wishes

The ISA staff (Israel State Archives Staff, email message to author, September 25, 2019)

The subject of the recording that I was given access to is about the proposed construction of a channel that would have connected the Mediterranean and Indian Ocean. All other forms that I had sent requesting access to recordings with explicitly Palestinian content were ignored. What I *did* gain through this cumbersome online retrieval system was knowledge about an official ISA YouTube channel that was not explicitly mentioned within the Israel Radio Recordings series. The situation is obfuscated further because none of the descriptions for the YouTube videos match the archival descriptions promoted on the ISA website. This YouTube channel houses 659 of the Israel Broadcasting Authority's recordings from 1967 and is fully accessible to the public, if one knows of the existence of the channel and can somehow match the videos to their official descriptions based on their content, that is. Few clearly do. The average engagement for each video ranges from as low as 26 views to as high as 1000. The ISA's decision to host this series of the Six Day War Files Collection on an obscure YouTube channel rather than with the rest of the Collection on the heavily promoted official ISA website is highly suspect.

The outcome of this appraisal decision has far greater impact than simply to call into question the preservation and curatorial practices of the ISA, for it is telling of the willful obstruction of the accessibility of the records to the public. When implemented effectively, digitization increases the accessibility of a textual record that normally could only be viewed in-person at a single site. For nations that have ruptures in their archival heritage due to political conflict, ensuring the continuity of access to their records becomes increasingly important. For instance, Charles Kecskeméti (2017) has stressed the importance of "reconstituting the archival heritages dismembered during the Second World War and … [the] opening up of occupying military authorities' archives" (p. 15). Digitization has been key in such circumstances to facilitate access to and joint custody of material held within the archives of former colonizers. On the other hand, digitization in the context of the Six Day War Files has been utilized to render the *appearance* of accessibility while impeding the public's access to the records. Clearly the ISA has both the original and digitized versions of these records within their custody, so why is the digital copy not available on their archive website? Why are their YouTube locations not publicly disclosed? The implication of this appraisal decision, to only disclose the digital existence of some records and not others, is that the ISA can now maintain a sense of control over who has access to this series. More importantly, it means that the ISA can compile a record of who is requesting to view these records.

The need to delink the Six Day War Files from their colonial matrix extends beyond the records themselves to the archival practices within which they have been shaped. As Cushman (2013) reminds us, "imperialist archives are always already framed within a colonialist mindset" (p. 130) during creation, description, digitization, and access. The Six Day War Files were created and archived with the intention of glorifying and justifying Israel's imperialism in a war that exiled and killed Palestinians disproportionately, while relegating the remaining Palestinian population to a sliver of the region's land. When determining who has access to these records, we can expect the process of archivalization to also be framed within this colonialist mindset. Potentially incriminating information within these records have been censored while public access to an entire series has been impeded through selective appraisal. In doing so, the archivists have shielded the Israeli government from public accountability while denying Palestinians the right to access their own information. Symbolically annihilating the epistemologies of the colonized through record creation and archival description works to inscribe the hierarchy of the colonizer's truth over the counternarratives of the colonized. The restriction of information through inequitable access conditions is a further extension of colonial power through which to control and monitor the movements of the colonial subject as they attempt to gain access to the colonizer's knowledge.

Conclusion

In 1985, Israel was decreed to be both a Jewish and a democratic state in its Basic Law, the Knesset (2003, 7.a.1). Yet how can the state claim democracy when its non-Jewish citizens are hindered from documenting and accessing information pertaining to their own history? Palestinians have been excluded from the archivalization of the Six Day War Files Collection despite the information within the records having real-world consequences for Israel's Palestinian subjects in the way of citizenship rights, self-governance, and cultural recognition. Scholars Abu-Laban & Bakan (2020) trouble Israel's assertion of being both a democracy and an ethno-state, stating that "there is an inherent contradiction in a polity that claims to be simultaneously open and inclusive, or democratic, while positing an exclusive core mission—insisting on Israel's national identity as a distinctly 'Jewish' state rather than a state of all its citizens" (p. 178). With this being the normative social reality, why would the ISA operate any differently in its approach to the archivalization of the Six Day War Files than to privilege the interests of its Jewish population?

Through an analysis of the various forms of power and privilege pervading the Six Day War Files Collection, I have sought to emphasize how Palestinians and their losses experienced in 1967 have been symbolically annihilated in the process of the records' creation and subsequent preservation. When the records were originally created, Israel's Cabinet ministers erased Palestinians from the discussion to justify the exile of Palestinian refugees, the annexation East Jerusalem, and the denial of Palestinian governance to the remaining Palestinian territory. This foundation of systemic racial inequality continues to define Israel to this day as these sentiments have become fixed in the archive. This is seen in the archival description of the Collection, whereby the archivists have erased Palestinian history, land names, and land rights in favor of Zionist remapping and deterritorialization. By reframing *Al-Khalil* as Hebron, Palestinians as "Arabs," and occupation and settler colonialism as "victory" and a "return," the archivists of the ISA continue to deny cultural and national identity to Palestine and its people. The archivists have also censored information within the records that likely contains incriminating actions and statements about Palestine while willfully impeding public access to an entire series through selective appraisal decisions. In doing so, the archivists force Palestinians to navigate Israeli mechanisms of control if they wish to access information about

themselves. In short, the Six Day War Files Collection asserts Israel's colonial power while subsuming Palestinian counternarratives in both the creation and archivalization of the records, thereby justifying the subjugated position of Palestinians in society and the unequal distribution of civil liberties.

Archives mirror the power structures in which they are situated, and in colonial states they function as institutions of hegemony. "Modern archival methodology [has taken] on the role of bureaucratizing history in order to establish superiority over the colonized" (Genovese, 2016, pp. 33-34) while providing justification for carrying out genocide, the theft of land, and the theft of cultural artifacts. Knowing this, archivists can still engage with problematic archival material such as the Six Day War Files Collection because they are still valuable sites of inquiry that document how colonial legacies of violence become normalized. By unsettling this normalization and delinking the records from their colonial matrix, histories of Palestinian loss can resurface where they were symbolically annihilated. It is imperative that we engage with Palestine's carefully passed-down memories, lingering wounds, and murmurs of dissent "that ha[ve] been consistently negated by the rhetoric of modernity and in the imperial implementation of the logic of coloniality" (Mignolo, 2007, p. 457). If we are to unravel the symbolic annihilation of the colonized and exhume the sequestered guilt of the colonizer, we must first locate the tell-tale threads in such products of finely crafted archival imperialism and then rip the seams wide open.

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Notes

[1] Throughout this article, I refer to Palestinians as indigenous to the region currently occupied by Palestine and Israel, meaning they have a historical continuity with the land prior to Israeli colonialism. In this context I have chosen not to capitalize "indigenous" when referring to Palestinians to demarcate the cultural, racial, and social differences between Palestinians and Indigenous peoples (First Nation, Inuit, Metis, and Native peoples of Turtle Island).

[2] Upon their declassification, Israel State Archives chief archivist, Yaakov Lozovick, stated that "for the first time in 50 years it will be possible to closely follow the dynamic within the government regarding the Six-Day War… What were the ministers' initial positions regarding the future of the territories?" ("Thousands of Six Day War Documents Declassified," *Arutz Sheva: Israel National News,* 2017, paras. 5-6)

[3] *Aliyah,* a tenet of Zionism, refers to the immigration of Jews from the diaspora to Israel.

[4] The records of the Six Day War Files Collection were originally written in Hebrew. They have been translated into English by May Levi for this article.

[5] Though there are many archival descriptive standards (RAD, ISAD(G), DACS, etc.). All outline four to six hierarchical levels of description ranging from the collective entity to the single unit that will form the physical and intellectual arrangement of the archival material. The levels of arrangement used by the Israel State Archives are limited to the collection-level, series-level, and item-level. Except for the "Back to the Cisterns" photo series, the series in this collection are devoid of their own specific level of description and are instead described within the collection-level. There are files present within the collection, however these are items that have been compiled together digitally based on their shared subject matter, do not correspond to the same series, and are not provided with an overarching archival description.

[6] The internal appraisal report for the accession, arrangement, and description of the Collection is not available to the public, therefore the focus of this section will address this second question of appraisal for digitization.

Contact Information

Tamara N. Rayan
University of Toronto, M.A., M.I.
Email: tam.rayan@gmail.com

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